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WPBS

Saigon Coup Support Denied by U.S. Embassy

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, Oct. 16 — The United States Embassy here today denied a report it had encouraged the attempted military revolt last month against Premier Nguyen Khanh.

The military coup Sept. 13 was crushed with the arrests of three South Vietnamese army generals and 17 army officers and civilians. Their mass trial opened yesterday in the Palace of Justice.

One defendant, Brig. Gen. Lam Van Phat, was reported to have testified he was encouraged by Deputy U.S. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson. Phat's reported claim, however, was questioned by most newsmen covering the trial and denied by the United States Embassy.

An embassy spokesman said its observer at the trial was not aware Phat made such a remark. Newsmen said they understood Johnson merely asked Phat to avoid bloodshed.

An official transcript of Phat's testimony was not available immediately.

Meanwhile, a stepup in the Vietnamese war was indicated by four major engagements with the Communist-led Viet Cong on Thursday and Friday.

Government forces mauled the foe in two battles and suffered reversals in two. Up to nightfall a total of 84 Viet Cong and 37 government dead had been reported.

Fighting was reported still ranging at dusk today in the southern delta region, where Vietnamese airborne units caught a major Viet Cong force, killing at least 44 of the guerrillas, American sources reported.

On Thursday, two Red battalions attacked an army outfit in Hau Nghia province about 40 miles northwest of Saigon and Viet Cong units penetrated a village near Phuoc Vinh, in Phuoc Thanh province.

At Hau Nghia, 26 government soldiers were killed, 11 wounded and 11 were reported missing. The Reds

killed six Vietnamese soldiers and six others were missing in the Phuoc Vinh action. No mention was made of Viet Cong losses in either of the attacks.

The government said the Viet Cong suffered 40 dead in the third clash, near Duc Hue, 30 miles north of Saigon. Five government troops were killed and 10 wounded there.